

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the potential of the proposed project to affect urban design and visual resources. The proposed project would enlarge an existing commercial center known as the Staten Island Mall (the Mall) in the Heartland Village neighborhood of Staten Island. The proposed actions would facilitate the development of approximately 426,576 gross square feet (gsf) of new uses at the project site. In conjunction with this enlargement, the proposed project includes the development of a new parking structure and exterior landscape improvements.

Under the 2014 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, urban design is defined as the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. These components include streets, buildings, visual resources, open spaces, natural resources, and wind. An urban design assessment under CEQR must consider whether and how a project may change the experience of a pedestrian in a project area. The *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines recommend the preparation of a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources, followed by a detailed analysis, if warranted based on the conclusions of the preliminary assessment. The preliminary analysis provided below addresses urban design characteristics and visual resources for existing conditions and the future without and with the proposed project.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The preliminary analysis provided below concluded that the proposed project would have no significant adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources, or the pedestrian's experience of these characteristics of the built and natural environment. Thus, the proposed project does not merit further analysis of urban design and visual resources.

B. METHODOLOGY

Based on the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources is appropriate when there is the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond that allowed by existing zoning. Examples include projects that permit the modification of yard, height, and setback requirements, and projects that result in an increase in built floor area beyond what would be allowed 'as-of-right' or in the future without the proposed project.

While the proposed project would comply with the existing zoning regulations related to building height, bulk, and setback requirements, it requires a zoning authorization to reduce parking requirements on the project site. The reduction in the size of the existing parking field would constitute a physical alteration observable by pedestrians that is not allowed by existing zoning. Therefore, the proposed project meets the threshold for a preliminary assessment of potential impacts to urban design and visual resources.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for urban design is the area where the project may influence land use patterns and the built environment, and is generally consistent with that used for the land use analysis. For visual resources, the view corridors within the study area from which such resources are publicly viewable should be identified. The land use study area may serve as the initial basis for analysis; however, in cases where significant visual resources exist, it may be appropriate to look beyond the land use study area to encompass views outside of this area, as is often the case with waterfront sites or sites within or near historic districts.

The project site does not include any waterfront sites and is not located within a historic district. Therefore, the study area for the urban design and visual resources analysis has been defined as a 400-foot radius around the project site, consistent with the study area radius used for the analysis of land use, zoning, and public policy (see **Figures 5-1** through **5-3**).

The *CEQR Technical Manual* recommends an analysis of pedestrian wind conditions for projects that result in the construction of large buildings at locations that experience high wind conditions (such as along the waterfront, or other locations where winds from the waterfront are not attenuated by buildings or natural features), which may result in an exacerbation of wind conditions due to “channelization” or “downwash” effects that may affect pedestrian safety. The proposed project would not result in the construction of a large building at a location that experiences high wind conditions, and thus a pedestrian wind analysis is not warranted.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

URBAN DESIGN

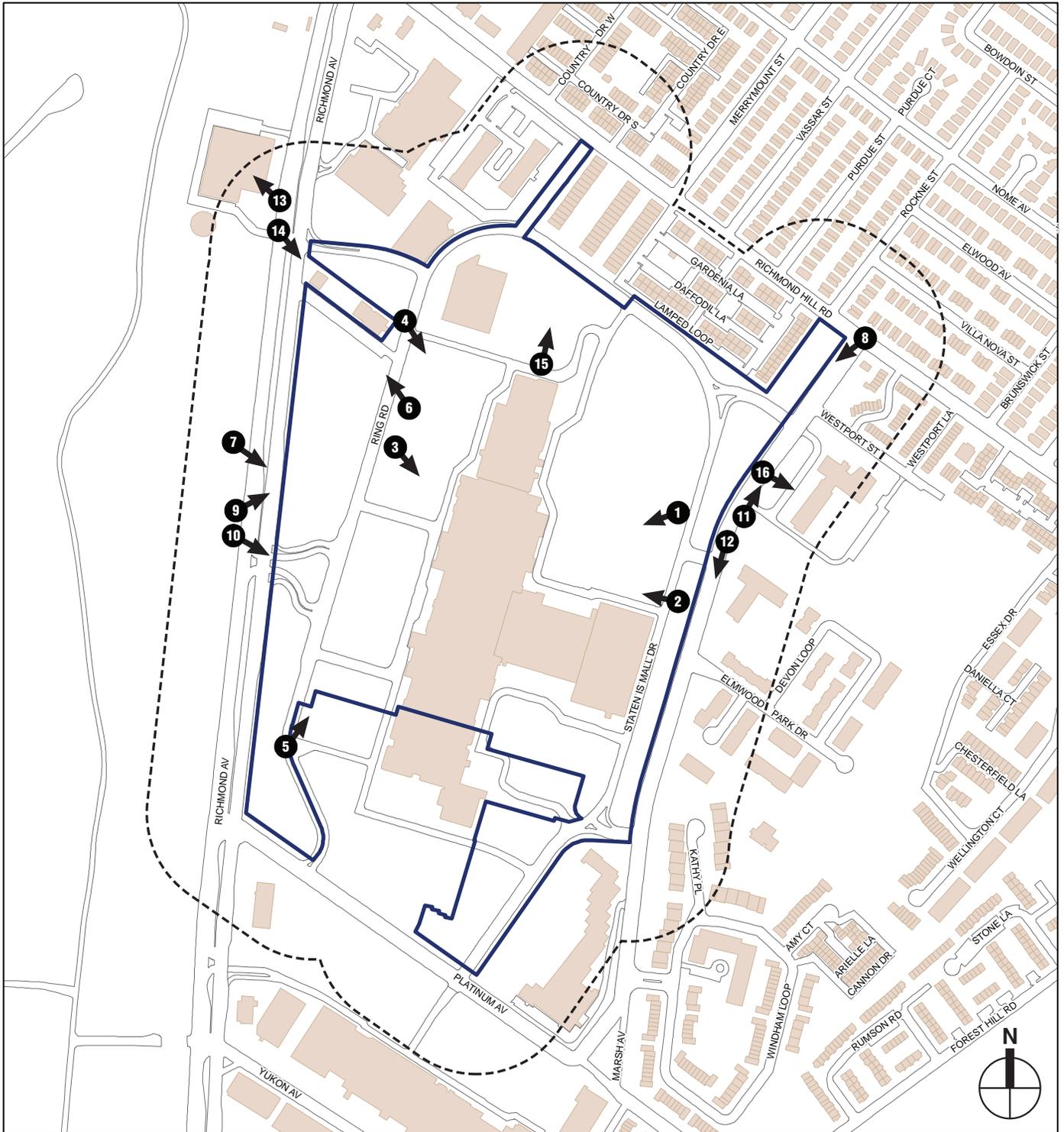
PROJECT SITE

The project site is a 3,700,605-square-foot area generally bounded by Richmond Hill Road, Marsh Avenue, Platinum Road, and Richmond Avenue (see **Figure 5-1**). The project site contains portions of the Staten Island Mall, a regional shopping center arranged with three anchor department stores on its north, south, and east sides. The Mall currently comprises three zoning lots; however, the zoning lot which includes the Sears department store at the south end of the Mall and its adjacent parking field are not included in the current project site.

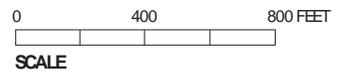
The Mall is roughly T-shaped in its massing, with its longer side roughly parallel with Richmond Avenue. It is a collection of interconnected buildings with boxy footprints (see Views 1-5 of **Figures 5-4** through **5-6**). The building facades have little to no ornamentation (other than signage) and a variety of surface materials, including painted brick and concrete. The Macy’s store is 3 stories (approximately 30 feet) tall; the main section of the Mall is 2 stories (approximately 20 feet) tall; and the portion of the Mall containing the JCPenney store has both 2- and 3-story (20- and 30-foot-tall) sections.

Collectively, the project site contains over 1.2 million gsf of retail uses, including department stores, restaurant and food court uses, and common space, receiving, and service areas. The built FAR of the project site is approximately 0.32 FAR; the site’s C4-1 zoning district allows commercial uses up to a maximum FAR of 1.0, residential uses of up to 1.25 FAR, and community facility uses of up to 2.0 FAR. The lot coverage of the project site is an estimated 17.7 percent.

Surrounding the Mall on all sides is a large surface parking field containing approximately 5,844 parking spaces (see View 6 of **Figure 5-6**). The parking field is spotted with tall lampposts,



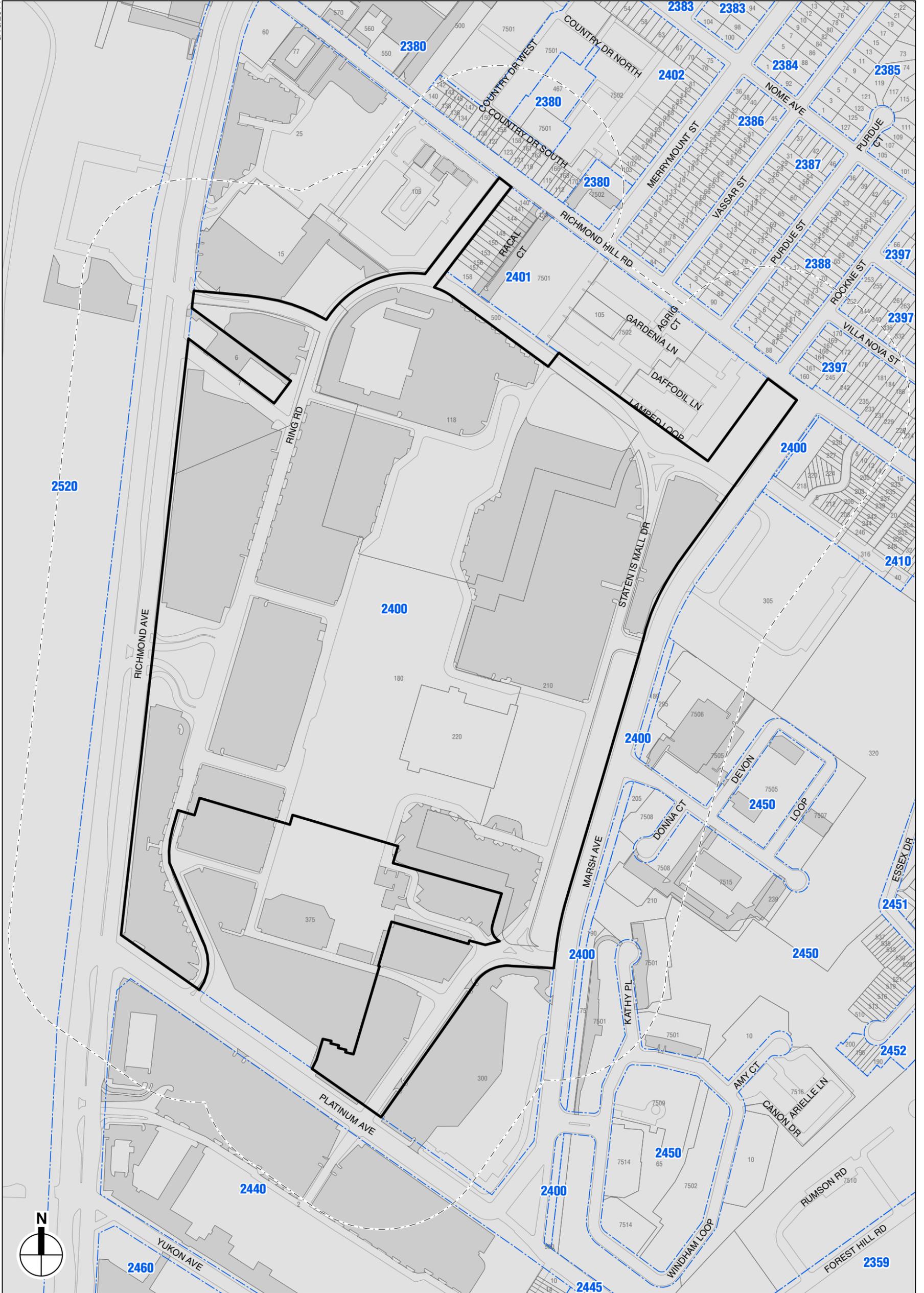
-  Project Area
-  Study Area Boundary (400-Foot Perimeter)
-  Photograph Reference Number and View Direction





 Project Site
 Study Area (400-foot boundary)

0 1,000 Feet
SCALE



-  Project Site
-  Tax Block Boundary
-  Tax Lot Boundary



Northwest corner of Mall, view southwest from near Marsh Avenue 1



View west from eastern edge of Mall 2



West side of Mall, view from parking field 3



West side of Mall, including potential garage site, view from west of Ring Road 4



Southwest corner of Mall 5



Northwest corner of the Mall and parking field, with view to Richmond Avenue and development north of Mall 6

which provide lighting for parkers accessing the lot at night. There are some trees and other landscaping directly adjacent to the Mall structures and at the periphery of the site, but not within the parking field itself, except to separate the internal/circulation roads from parking spaces. Based on surveys conducted by the Applicants, and observed during site visits for this analysis, these spaces are currently underutilized. There are several vehicular entrances to the Mall and its parking field; three off Marsh Avenue, two off Staten Island Mall Drive, one off Platinum Road, three off Richmond Avenue, and one off Richmond Hill Road. The main entrance to the Mall is off Richmond Avenue and is denoted by a large, free-standing sign (see View 7 of **Figure 5-7**). The main areas of landscaping are “buffer” areas at the north side of the mall and along Marsh Avenue, which serve to visually separate the Mall from surrounding residential uses.

The project site also includes the portion of Ring Road extending north to Richmond Hill Road, and an undeveloped, grassy area north of the Mall at the southwest corner of Richmond Hill Road and Marsh Avenue (see View 8 of **Figure 5-7**). The topography of the project site is relatively flat. Other than the landscaping noted above, the site contains no natural resources.

STUDY AREA

The project’s study area does not have a consistent street pattern. West of Richmond Avenue, there are no mapped streets, as this area is currently vacant land slated to become part of Fresh Kills Park. The area along Richmond Hill Road has a modified grid pattern, with some cul-de-sacs and interior streets serving specific residential developments. The streets in the area east of Marsh Avenue almost entirely are to serve specific residential developments; south of Platinum Road, there are only a few east-west oriented streets. Richmond Avenue, Richmond Hill Road, Marsh Avenue, and Platinum Road are the major streets in the study area. Richmond Avenue is a major thoroughfare, with four lanes of traffic in each direction, separated by a raised median. Marsh Avenue and Platinum Road have two lanes of traffic in each direction, separated by a wide, striped median; and Richmond Hill Road has two lanes of traffic in each direction and sidewalks that appear somewhat narrower than those on Marsh Avenue. Due to the expansive parking fields around the Mall and the “buffer” landscaping areas noted above, the Mall structures themselves appear distant in the pedestrian views from sidewalks on these surrounding streets (see Views 9-12 of **Figures 5-8** and **5-9**).

The vacant land slated to become part of Fresh Kills Park is extensively covered with mature trees. Just north of the future Fresh Kills Park area is a New York City Sanitation Department garage facility, a 2-story utilitarian red-brick structure surrounded by surface parking (see Views 13 of **Figure 5-10**). On the east side of Richmond Avenue north of the project site, near the intersection with Richmond Hill Road, are mostly large-scale retail establishments in large-footprint, utilitarian structures, fast-food restaurants, and accessory parking fields and large-scale signage on pylons (see View 14 of **Figure 5-10**). In this portion of the study area, the commercial structures are oriented closer to the road than the mall, as parking fields are much smaller. Past the commercial development at the intersection of Richmond Avenue and Richmond Hill Road, the study area is predominantly residential. The tallest development in the study area is along this street: two 7-story apartment buildings, oriented perpendicular to Richmond Hill Road, set back behind a chain link fence, landscaping and surface parking (see View 15 of **Figure 5-11**). More typical development in this portion of the study area are 3-story townhomes and semi-detached houses, mostly developed in the late 20th century and clad in brick and a variety of siding materials. Many residential developments in the area include private open space for residents.



Richmond Avenue entrance to Mall 7



Portion of project site at Marsh Avenue and Richmond Hill Road, view south 8



View east to Mall from west side of Richmond Avenue 9



View east to Mall from west side of Richmond Avenue 10



View north on Marsh Avenue 11



View south on Marsh Avenue 12



Department of Sanitation facility, view from Richmond Avenue 13



Development north of Mall, view east from Richmond Avenue 14



Residential development north of Mall, view north from parking field. 15



P.S. 58, view east from Marsh Avenue 16

Staten Island Mall Enlargement

Along Marsh Avenue, the study area includes P.S. 58, a modern, 4-story school with an L-shaped footprint, constructed in 2001 (see Views 16 of **Figure 5-11**). The school is surrounded by mature trees and a metal fence. South of the school, there are several residential developments, mostly 3-story, multi-unit complexes set back from the avenue and surrounded by extensive landscaping. At the southeast corner of the study area, at the intersection of Platinum Road and Marsh Avenue, is a retail strip-mall development, all in 1-story buildings. The structures are oriented toward Staten Island Mall Drive; therefore, views along Marsh Avenue are of their unornamented, rear facades with multiple truck loading bays. The structures are slightly below the grade of Marsh Avenue and are separated from the Marsh Avenue sidewalk by a chain link fence. South of Platinum Road are more large-scale retail uses in unornamented, mostly 1-story concrete structures, set back from the road behind large parking fields. The study area also includes the southernmost portion of the Mall: the Sears department store building and its adjacent parking field. The Sears store is 2 stories (approximately 20 feet) tall, with a 1-story section at its southeast corner.

The major streets in the study area have extensive tree cover, particularly along Marsh Avenue and Richmond Road; overhead power lines; small sidewalk-mounted stoplights as well as stoplights extending over the streetbed; standard, cobrahead-style lampposts; and standard street furniture, including bus shelters for the patrons of the number of bus routes serving streets surrounding the mall, including a Select Bus Service (SBS) service line that runs between the Mall and Bay Ridge. There are also large, free-standing signs for the mall at the southwest corner of Richmond Road and Platinum Avenue, and at the main mall entrance off Richmond Road.

Lot sizes are generally large for the commercial uses in the study area, and for the residences on the east side of Marsh Avenue; however, the residential structures along and north of Richmond Hill Road are generally on much smaller lots.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The *CEQR Technical Manual* defines a visual resource as “the connection from the public realm to significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources.”

PROJECT SITE

As described above, the project site is currently occupied by a large-scale, regional shopping center and its surrounding parking fields. The project site does not contain any visual resources.

STUDY AREA

There are no visual resources within the study area. Richmond Avenue provides the longest view corridor in the study area, due to its width and generally linear alignment; however, views along this thoroughfare do not include any visual resources (see Views 9-10 of **Figure 5-8** above). Views along Marsh Avenue are more limited due to its slight changes in alignment (see Views 11-12 of **Figure 5-9** above). Westward views along Platinum Road and Richmond Hill Avenue end with the vacant, vegetated land that will become Fresh Kills Park.

D. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

URBAN DESIGN

PROJECT SITE

Absent the proposed project, no development is anticipated to occur on the project site. Conditions on the project site are expected to remain unchanged from existing conditions.

STUDY AREA

As described in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,” no major projects are anticipated in the study area by 2017. Therefore, the urban design and visual character of the study area are anticipated to remain substantially the same as in existing conditions.

Well after 2017, the vacant land west of Richmond Avenue will be converted to open space uses and become part of Fresh Kills Park. Once completed, Fresh Kills Park will be a 2,200-acre resource on what was formerly the world’s largest landfill. The park will be built in phases over the next 30 years, and will include natural areas such as creeks, wetlands, and expansive meadows, and uses that showcase vistas of the New York City region.

VISUAL RESOURCES

PROJECT SITE AND STUDY AREA

There are no visual resources on the project site or in the study area, and no development is anticipated to occur on the project site or study area in the future without the proposed project. Therefore, no notable changes to view corridors or significant views to visual resources would be anticipated.

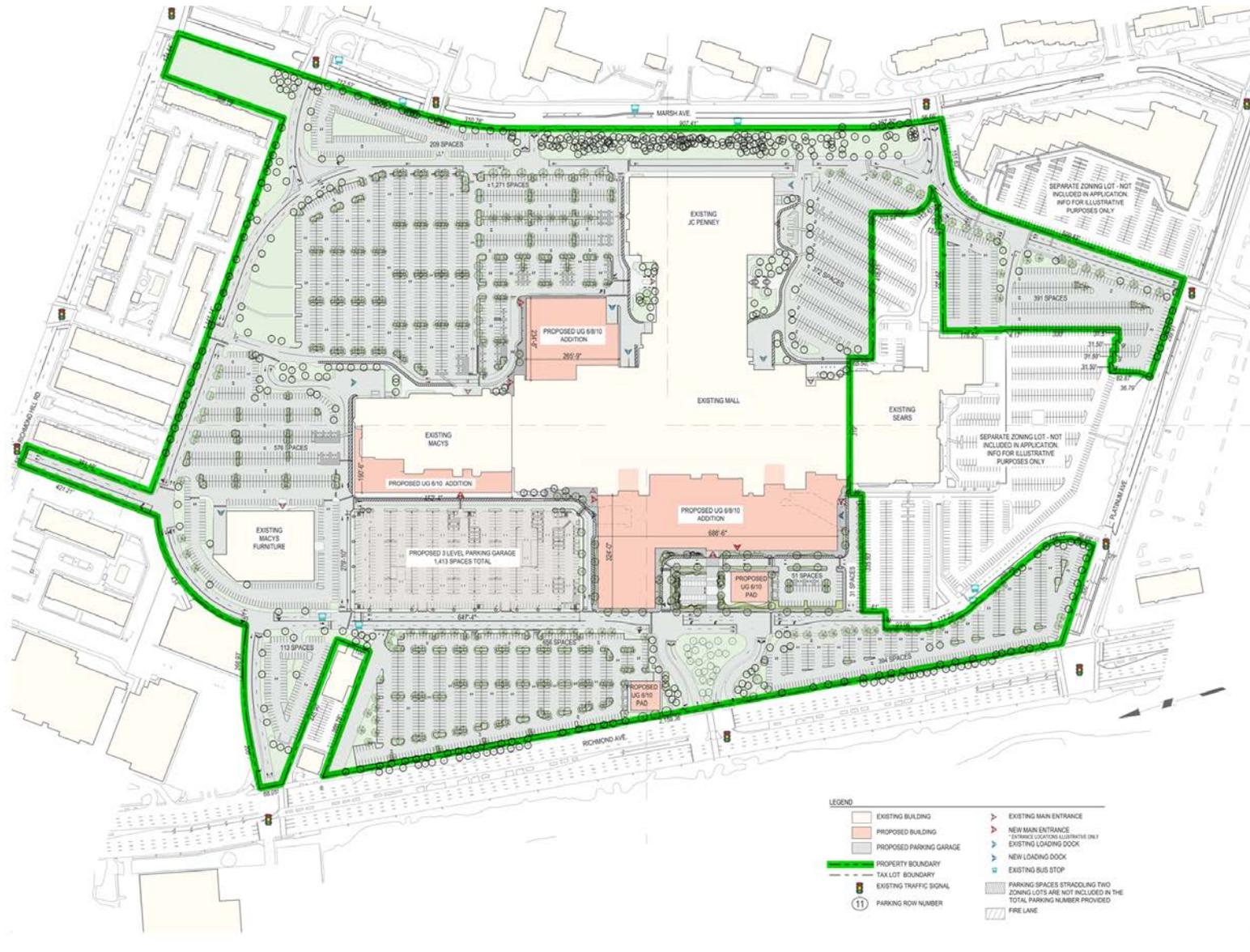
E. FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECT

URBAN DESIGN

The *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines state that if the preliminary assessment shows that changes to the pedestrian environment are sufficiently significant to require greater explanation and further study, then a detailed analysis is appropriate. Examples include projects that would potentially obstruct view corridors, compete with icons in the skyline, or make substantial alterations to the streetscape of a neighborhood by noticeably changing the scale of buildings. Detailed analyses also are generally appropriate for area-wide rezonings that include an increase in permitted floor area or changes in height and setback requirements, general large-scale developments, or projects that would result in substantial changes to the built environment of a historic district or components of a historic building that contribute to the resource’s historic significance.

PROJECT SITE

Approval of the proposed actions would facilitate the development of an approximately 426,576-gsf enlargement of the Mall on areas currently used for surface parking. Uses within the expanded areas are intended to include retail, restaurants, a supermarket, and a cinema. The enlargement would comprise a two-story, approximately 45-foot-tall addition to the west side of the existing Macy’s building and a generally L-shaped two-story, up to 65-foot-tall addition to the west side of the Mall, south of the Macy’s building (see Figures 5-12 and 5-13). The L-shaped addition would include a new entrance to the Mall. To accommodate the development of the proposed project, surface parking spaces on the project site would be removed and replaced





Staten Island Mall Enlargement

by a new structured garage with a capacity of 1,413 parking spaces (three levels, approximately 542,550 gsf in size, see **Figure 5-14**). With the new square footage that is expected to be added as a result of the proposed project, the project site would contain approximately 1,655,390 gsf of development (including gsf associated with the existing Mall). While the project would require a zoning authorization for the reduction in surface parking and a modification or waiver of parking maneuverability and landscaping provisions, it would be compliant with all other use and bulk requirements of the Zoning Resolution. The only change resulting from the proposed actions that would be visible from the pedestrian's perspective would be a slight reduction in the size parking field, and a slight change in its configuration. The proposed parking facility also requires a zoning approval, but only for its internal layout. The built FAR of the project site would increase from approximately 0.32 FAR to 0.44 FAR, but would still be well under the maximum FAR of 1.0. The lot coverage of the project site (including paved portions of parking areas) would decrease slightly, from approximately 17.7 percent to 29.2 percent.

The proposed project also would include landscape improvements throughout the project site's surface parking areas, including planting approximately 427 new trees. These trees would be planted in areas including the perimeter of the proposed parking structure, as well as within and along the edges of various parking areas. The proposed project also would enhance the main Mall entry point on Richmond Avenue with new trees and the creation of a multi-use plaza (see **Figure 5-15**). The plaza would be designed with paving, landscaping, and lighting so that it may function as a pedestrian plaza to be used for public events including holiday fairs, greenmarkets, and cultural events.

The proposed project would result in the addition of new uses that are already present on the project site or would be compatible with such uses. The size and massing of the proposed additions and parking structure would be consistent with development on the project site. In addition, the proposed project would enhance the pedestrian's experience of the project site by making landscape improvements through the project site and creating the multi-use plaza.

STUDY AREA

The uses of the proposed project would be consistent with that of the study area, which contain a variety of retail structures and associated parking. The proposed building additions and parking structure would be of a massing, height, and with a streetwall consistent with the existing urban design of the area, which includes buildings of varying footprints, heights, and streetwalls. In general, the project's configuration and design would be consistent with buildings in the immediate vicinity of the project site.

By replacing a portion of the surface parking field with new structures, the proposed project would reduce the actual and perceived distance to this development from surrounding sidewalks and provide more visual interest to the pedestrian along Richmond and Marsh Avenues. The proposed structures would be located on an existing block and would not alter the street pattern of the study area.

The proposed project would not change the scale of buildings in the study area; would not involve an area-wide rezoning that includes an increase in permitted floor area or changes in height or setback requirements; and would not involve a general large-scale development. The proposed project also would not result in substantial changes to the built environment of any historic districts or components of a historic building that contribute to the resource's historic significance. Except for the proposed project, no changes are anticipated in the study area.





Therefore, the proposed project would not be anticipated to adversely affect the urban design of the study area, and would not adversely affect the experience of the pedestrian.

VISUAL RESOURCES

PROJECT SITE AND STUDY AREA

According to the guidance of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, additional visual resources analysis is required if: a project would partially or totally block a view corridor or a natural or built resource visual resource, and that resource is rare in the area or considered a defining feature of the neighborhood; or, a project would change urban design features so that the context of a natural or built visual resource is altered (for example, if a project alters the street grid so that the approach to the resource changes; if a project changes the scale of surrounding buildings so that the context changes; or if a project removes lawns or other open areas that serve as a setting for the resource).

The proposed project would not partially or totally block a view corridor or screen any significant publicly accessible views to visual resources. Within the study area, the proposed additions and parking structure and landscape elements would be most visible along Richmond and Marsh Avenues; however, as discussed above, there is extensive tree cover on both streets, which serves to limit views inward from the perimeter sidewalks. From these locations, the new structures would appear consistent with the urban design of the project site and study area. As it is located on an existing block, it would not obstruct views along any streets or obstruct any significant publicly accessible views of visual resources in the study area.

In summary, the proposed project would not change urban design features so that the context of a natural or built resource is adversely altered, and would not partially or totally block any significant views to a visual resource. Therefore, the proposed project would not be anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts to visual resources.

Overall, the proposed project would have no significant adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources, or the pedestrian's experience of these characteristics of the built and natural environment. The proposed project does not merit further analysis of urban design and visual resources.

F. FUTURE WITH 2019 COMPLETION DATE

As detailed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," there is the possibility that Macy's would elect to postpone commencement of construction of its proposed 75,000-gsf enlargement, in which case the Macy's enlargement and a portion of the proposed structured parking garage would be expected to be complete by 2019, rather than by 2017.

There are no additional background development projects that are currently expected to be built in the study area between 2017 and 2019, and no work on the portion of Fresh Kills Park within and adjacent to the study area is expected to be undertaken during this time. This scenario would not change the mix of uses that currently exist or would exist on the site in the No Action condition and the 2017 With Action condition. The project elements that would enhance the pedestrian experience (the planting of trees at the main Mall entry point on Richmond Avenue and the creation of the new multi-use plaza) would still be completed by 2017. This 2019 Full-Build Scenario would not result in any different effects to urban design or visual resources, as compared to the proposed action under the 2017 With Action condition. Therefore, this 2019 Full-Build Scenario would not result in any significant adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources. *